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## ERRATA.

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On page 44 read "The January, 1901, Atlantic," instead of "May, 1891."

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## ADDENDA.

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Since writing this booklet the author has been told that in San Francisco a school law has been passed by which no child under the age of fifteen can be forced to study at home; a step in a good direction this, for which we are indebted to Mrs. Mary Kincaid.

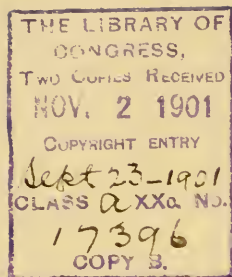








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**ELIZABETH STRONG WORTHINGTON.**

## PREFACE.

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Those who have made Pedagogy a life study, may resent criticism from an outsider; but I hope they will bear in mind that many a valuable hint has come from a humble source.

I sit in my dear little nest, and brood over my birdlings, but even in this retirement, I am visited by thoughts which may, perhaps, be of service to those who have the opportunity and ability to carry them out. Although I am no architect, I can note the overloaded—the sinking column, and call in those who are able to relieve the pressure, and restore the equilibrium; I can note the smoldering fire in the house-top, and sound the alarm. So, perhaps, I may be able to note the overloaded, sinking brain, and the smoldering fires of Sensuality, and sound The Tocsin.

May the call be heard, and may the Great Architect—the Great Chief—send his good, wise, capable agents of relief, for the saving of our children.

ELIZABETH STRONG WORTHINGTON.



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# OUR CHILDREN IN PERIL.

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## PART I.

### THE OVERCROWDED BRAIN.

Not many months ago, in a Western city, two young girls, unconnected with one another, at different times, went out of this world into the next, and by the wrong door; the one turned on the gas, and the other endured the torture of carbolic acid, to escape the torture of the curriculum.

Both were in the high school; both had been suffering from ill health; both were tired and discouraged in their struggle to keep abreast with the work, and both laid down voluntarily and went to sleep, to waken, they probably hoped, where they would be assigned tasks not beyond their powers of accomplishment.

It was an awful thing for the families—these two suicides, but by God's help the suffering and premature end of their young lives may be the means of saving others, for these cases have already attracted attention, and must attract more. There was, of course, an investigation, and in the course of this the superintendent of public schools said (so the report ran) that he did not hold the schools guilty; the young girls were not up to the usual standard of strength and should not have attempted full work. Parents, he insisted, were too

ambitious for their children, wanting them to take the full course and graduate, even when they knew that they had weak constitutions.

There is something of value in all of this, but it does not strike down to the root of the matter; we must probe deeper before we can discover and heal the original trouble.

If these young girls presented, to our mental vision, cases as new as they are startling, we might accept the remedy suggested by the superintendent's defense, and rest content; but when we look abroad throughout the length and breadth of our land, we are compelled to conclude that such a remedy would but ill fit the enormity of the trouble which we are called upon to treat.

If we will but listen fairly and intelligently, we shall hear from all quarters the same cry—overwork; if we will but look with honest eyes, we shall see the same sight—tired, broken down youths and maidens. This has been brought home personally to me again and again—not through my own children, for I have not allowed them to suffer—but through the failure of my efforts to secure a normal, healthy young woman to teach my younger ones. Fate and inclination have made a tramp of me for some years, so I have had opportunity to test this matter of curriculum in several cities, and have also, in a number of different parts of the country, put forth efforts to secure assistance at home in the training of my children.

Again and again I have heard: "I am not very strong; I broke down the last year at the high school;" or: "I have never been well since I left the university."

My experience in this regard has led me to the con-

clusion that it is most difficult to find a college graduate whose nervous system is not badly impaired; most difficult to find even a high school or a normal school graduate who has not been more or less injured nervously.

Nor is this all the testimony we can offer in the case. Throughout our land there are intelligent parents who will tell you of sad cases of shattered nerves among their children; all over our land are physicians who will tell you of young patients, broken by school work—they will tell of requests by the thousands for some tonic that will serve to temporarily mend the nerves, and enable them to hold out until after graduation—some medical lash to stimulate the tired, broken steed to keep up and keep on until the goal is reached. What then? Life just fairly begins when the student closes the university door behind him, and we who have lived over thirty years realize that a strong body, an unimpaired brain, and sound nerves, are factors among the outfit necessary to meet life properly.

Our young folks do not know this; we have to know it for them. "Oh, if I can only get past graduation day safely, I don't care what comes then." That is their attitude. Throughout their course, this same graduation day has loomed up before their young, inexperienced eyes as the goal of all effort; toward this they turned their little feet on the very first day of entering school, and whenever, in the course of succeeding years, they have stumbled and fallen, their first look on rising has been toward the goal, to see if, by slipping, they have lost ground and are set back from the object of all their work. The large majority of our young people are

working for marks, and marks are of value in proportion as they bear on the final great day. They are not working for Life; that is the unknown, but for that which is known—the diploma; and each year as it is presented to excited, fluttering candidates, those in the lower ranks look on and desire it more ardently than ever. It is small wonder then that they can not use temperance in their gait. What then? we must use it for them. And how? Ah me! how? In this, as in all else, it were easier to tell the twenty what were good to be done, than to be one of the twenty to do it.

Temperance, like consistency, is a jewel, and we must look far and long ere we find it, even in grown up ranks. What folly then to expect it in children, and how criminal to leave children to furnish this jewel for their guidance, or to break down for lack of it. To be stupid; to be lacking in ambition; to be unprincipled and to shirk—all this is not being temperate, and I am not writing of children of this sort; physically these will come out well enough; it is for the mettlesome, the high-spirited, the aspiring that we must fear.

Ay, we fear for those who are made of the mettle which carries America to the front wherever she goes; for those who are of the same sort as were our forefathers, when they snapped our bonds and wrote America on the banner of the free; of the same sort as those who have carried our flag more than half way around the world, and made it one of the most respected, as well as one of the most beloved, of all that flutter in the winds of heaven. Perhaps he did not mean it so, nevertheless this is the sort that the superintendent was reported as calling weak. You know, and I know, however,



that this weakness is our strength—our nerve. Like the delicate machinery of a watch it is easily put out of gear; an ignorant, clumsy touch and it is ruined, but with care, with wisdom in the handling, it keeps time, and holds true to the course, year after year.

Now what must we do with this, our finest mettle, in the school? Must we select an especial course for such children, and deny them the crowning glory of their school year—graduation; the public recognition of the value of their work; the “well done” of the faculty and trustees? What would be the effect of that? Try it on a horse; take a mettlesome thoroughbred, capable of winning the race, if placed in proper hands; give him to an ignorant jockey whose only idea of gaining the required speed is to use the lash. Command him not to whip, and not to try to win, but to draw out, and jog along as best he can, on account of the weakness of his mount. Now watch the poor steed when the band plays, and the racers rush past him. See his delicate form quiver, and his eyeballs glow with excitement, as he plunges, in vain effort to take the place that lawfully belongs to him. Ay! belongs to him; for he has a right to a place in the van. So have our high-spirited children a right to run the race—a right to win. Indeed, we cannot spare them from the lists, and if the conditions are such that they cannot run without being injured, the conditions are at fault, and must be changed.

Nerves are troublesome factors; if diseased, they become our weakness; if healthy, our strength. Here in America, from the very beginning of a child's life, we are forced to deal with them, and the more highly bred the child, the more troublesome this particular factor,

as a general rule. Unhappily this is not universally understood—certainly not acted upon universally, even by our educators. All of us “grown-ups,” in fact, are more or less stupid in this regard, and our blunders militate seriously against our success in dealing with one another, as well as with children. We appreciate injuries to the body—apologize if we so much as tread upon our neighbor’s foot, but we tread upon his nerves without a pang of remorse. If our boys and girls happen to be well grown and strong looking outwardly, we pile mental work upon them, taxing and straining that delicate network, which is almost the essence of life, and for which the flesh is merely the protective case—in short riding rough-shod over that mysterious and intricate mesh known as the nervous system, without a thought of the incalculable injury we are doing.

Oliver Wendell Holmes refers to this when he speaks of the readiness with which we tap one another’s nerves when, no doubt, we would shrink from doing him fleshly harm. But a flesh wound usually heals, while an overstrained nerve is often a sad factor to deal with a whole life long.

We hear at once too much and too little of all this. It is unwise to accustom children to think of their nerves, but it is most unfortunate for those who have children in charge to overlook these nerves in a scheme of training. If teachers forget their duty in this regard, parents must jog their memories, and when I say this I am not without a vivid consciousness of the unpleasantness and difficulty of the task. We mothers especially, are liable to the imputation of fussiness, foolishness, and all sorts of other nesses, which we can not refute, and



often find it trying to rest under, when we urge caution in the direction of mental work for children. Even our married partners frequently laugh at our fears, and when we go to the school we are still more liable to ridicule.

I once found it very difficult to stand in the presence of the polite incredulity and amusement shown when I insisted that one of my children—a large stout-appearing boy—must not study out of school.

“He does not look delicate,” said the principal.

I winced before the subtle sarcasm, but took a firmer grip on my position. In view of the appearance my boy presented, and in view of the fact that he was ashamed to show at school the irritability which was to me the warning signal, I realized that it was futile to attempt to make his teacher understand the risk he would run, if his mental work were carried into the hours at home.

But I clung, with undying tenacity, to my “must not,” and protected the boy, although I did not enjoy posing as a silly woman.

This last, however, was but a trifle in the scale. We are what we are, rather than what another may think us; fortunately the verdict Foolish can not do away with good sense, and unhappily the verdict Sensible can not abolish folly.

No doubt I am pricked to more earnest effort toward a reformation in our school system by a vivid page in my own history. Like many another child, I was, soon after entering school, loaded with more books than my poor little brain could have held had time permitted me to study them. I used to look drearily at my armful as I went home, and realize that even if I worked during my every waking moment, I could not learn all that had

been assigned me for the next day. Then came the difficult task of choosing which to take and which to leave. To a conscientious, ambitious child this is always a hard matter; in the end he is all but certain to do just what I did—turn over the list feverishly, as a debt-laden man with a little money in his hands runs over his bills—“No, I *can't* leave this out;” and “No, I *mustn't* omit that,” and so on, until in the end the poor child who is attempting impossibilities, gives up, goes to school nervously worn out and discouraged, to make an attempt to slip through as many recitations as he can, and escape the dreaded zero.

Is it not easy to be seen that days and weeks of this sort result, not alone in a nerve disintegration but a moral disintegration as well. Happily for myself, my nerves gave way soon enough to save me from the full effort of the unconscious lack of faithfulness in class work, and for two years I was an invalid. The doctor's verdict was: “She will never be able to study again,” and this fell heavily on the hearing of parents who thought there was occasion for bright anticipations.

No one dared to tell me what was said, for fear of its possible effect, and week after week, I chafed, and as it were, watched the school door, seeing, with beating—all but breaking heart, my classmates walk on ahead of me. Fortunately the doctor was mistaken, and at the end of two years I was able to step into the school ranks again, healed but scarred.

Naturally, with such a leaf in the history of my childhood, I was on the alert, when my children started to school, to see that this unhappy tale was not “twice told,” and it was not long before I had occasion for con-

cern. My daughter, a child of almost nine, and her brother, one year younger, were kept in school until half past three, and then sent home with enough work to occupy three quarters of an hour or more. I refused to let them study at home, and they begged me to go and talk with their teachers, as they were afraid otherwise to leave their work undone. The teachers said they had no volition in the matter, so I repaired to the principal, a burly woman, with a voice and manner that harmonized with her figure. My interview was memorable, because of its being the only instance in which I have been treated with rudeness, on the many occasions upon which I have felt compelled to object to some features of the school work, or some school rule.

On entering the office, I was bidden, by the teacher who escorted me, to take a seat, which I did, while she approached the august personage who sat writing at a desk. After a low-voiced colloquy, in which she explained enough of my errand to raise the ire of her superior, the teacher came to me and said, in a deprecatory manner as if she were sorry to be forced to use me thus: "Miss Blank is very busy, and she says it is a rule of the school that pupils in those grades shall study at home three quarters of an hour daily.

I wished to reach the fountain of the trouble, so I asked: "Whose rule is it?"

Before the teacher could open her lips, Miss Blank, who still sat writing at her desk—her back turned toward me, snapped out: "It is *my* rule."

"Very well," I said to the teacher, "I have some matters to talk over with Miss Blank, and will await her leisure."

Then the teacher went out of the room, leaving me absolutely unprotected! I nerved myself for an encounter which I readily divined, from my study of the back of my robust antagonist, was to be of no trifling nature.

After some moments of waiting, she remarked, still without turning, "I'm very busy this morning, and I can't talk with you."

"I'll call another day, if you will be so kind as to name one convenient for you."

Then she wheeled in her chair and faced me.

"There's no use in our wasting time; the rule won't be changed for you, and it won't do any good for you to talk it over with me. I know just what you are going to say."

"I beg your pardon, but you do not know what I am going to say."

Then she waxed excitable, and poured forth a volley of words about the number of people wanting to see her at that moment, and the children needing her, and the duties in general claiming her attention. From this she launched into a treatise on the uselessness of my errand.

To all this I listened without a word. Had I stormed in return I should have been very harmless, for I should presently have realized I had put myself in a weak position by so doing; should have regretted my mood, and endeavored to make amends. But whenever I close my lips and in silence hear the enemy out, beware! Then I am dangerous.

When my big antagonist paused for breath, I said quietly: "Some other time would perhaps be more convenient for you; I'll wait."



She looked into my face and realized that I was capable of sitting on that chair for several years. Now very few principals would care to have the same woman wintering and summering in their office, as a steady thing, and this principal was not one of the few. So, after taking in the situation, and realizing that I had come to be heard, she swung a chair directly in front of me, and with a manner that would have caused a timid person to quail, said:

“Well, I may as well hear you now as any other time; what have you to say?”

A palmist once told me that I was not aggressive, and I think he was right. I am not fond of difficulties, but there are some subjects that nerve me to such a degree that I can enter a battle of any proportions with a certain relish, and one of these subjects is my children.

So it was without a feeling of the slightest timidity, but with the strongest sense of support in the justice of my cause, and—to be entirely frank—a relish of the situation as well, that I went through my task.

“You say this rule is not to be changed. Am I dealing with the Medes and Persians?”

She looked furious.

“You are ready to maintain then, that the public school system is perfect.”

“No, I haven’t said anything of the kind. I don’t suppose it is.”

“Very well then; if it is not perfect, it must be faulty, and if faulty, must be susceptible to change.”

“Well, this rule won’t be changed, for it was made for a purpose, and it answers that very well.”

“What is that, may I ask?”

"Why the children have to study at home as soon as they are in the higher grades, and this is to accustom them to it."

"I have heard of this method before," I remarked; "down in Mississippi my parents knew a woman who used to have her coachman drive her five or six miles Sunday morning to prepare her to endure the strain of the half-mile drive to church. Now setting aside all question of the advisability of the study hour or two at home later on, let me ask you if the best preparation for a hard pull is not the building up of the strength beforehand, and whether you think this purpose is best attained by denying to these little ones the freedom for play and the sunlight, which we all know are necessary factors in a child's normal development."

"Nobody wants to deny them sunlight and play," she said.

"I live near the school," I responded, "and yet my little ones don't reach home until a quarter of four. Between this hour and bedtime, half past seven, they must study three quarters of an hour, practice (I think you will allow that music is a very important part of their education), and take dinner, to say nothing of finding time for our family hour, when I read aloud and chat with them. How much space does this leave for running about in the sun and fresh air?"

"Half past seven is a very early bedtime. Most children sit up later than that."

"A half past seven start seldom means sleep before eight, or even a little later. Growing children, as you doubtless know, need a great deal of sleep."

"Well, will you tell me what you want?" she asked at length, in a tone tinged with desperation.

"Gladly; I want my children to be allowed to study in school. There are hours enough spent here for study and recitation both; but as matters go now, they are always given some work or something extra to keep them busy during the time when they could and should be studying."

"Very well, if your children can keep up with the grade without working at home, they are welcome to do it."

"And they may have time for study at school, instead of being compelled to take part in all these extra exercises?"

"Yes, they may."

I felt it was a case of the unjust judge; my *continuous sitting* wearied her, and she yielded.

But even with this concession, I found that the school did not agree with my babies. The change from a life in which, after three or four hours spent with their governess, they were given the freedom of birds for the rest of the sunlighted day, was too great and too hard for their precious, unfolding spirits and their chubby little bodies, so at the end of a month I returned them to the nursery school.

Two years later, when we had, like poor Joe, "moved on" to another place, I started them again, this time to a school where one could go with a question, or even an objection, and be certain of a courteous hearing. By this time my children were in perfect health again, but ere long the little daughter began to grow pale, and from being full of life and energy, became listless.



"What has come to pass?" the governess and I asked one another when we saw her seek the hammock as soon as she entered the house, day after day—she who had never seemed to tire—she whom we had often dubbed The Gay Little Girl.

When I proposed one of our good old fashioned tramps, she said, wearily:

"I can't go."

"Why not?"

"I have so much to study."

"What?"

"Oh, a page of Evangeline to commit to memory, and a long geography lesson, and my arithmetic."

"Where are they all?"

She brought out the books and handed them to me, with the places marked. I closed Evangeline with a snap.

"There now, your poetry is learned, what else?"

"Why mama!"

Next the geography went to with a bang, and the arithmetic was closed as tightly and as suddenly as the shell of a clam on the approach of danger.

"And now you've learned your geography and arithmetic, so you're ready for a walk; run, get your hat."

"But mama, I haven't learned my lessons."

"You've learned all you'll learn tonight."

"But I've no time to study in the morning."

"I know it."

"And I don't dare to go to school without my lessons, unless you go with me."

I readily consented, for I was wrought up to a pitch when the thought of an encounter with the enemy is a distinct relief.

By morning I had cooled somewhat, and indeed there was no need of battle, for as I learned in subsequent interviews, after becoming better acquainted with the gentle little teacher, she was quite my way of thinking.

"But what can we do?" she asked me. "We teachers are almost as helpless as the pupils. The pace is set for us and we are obliged to keep it. There are just so many pages to be gone over each term, and if many of our pupils fail to pass the examinations, we are held responsible, and generally lose our positions. What can we do?"

What indeed! But then and there I resolved that I would do all I could to call attention to this system, so ruinous to teachers and pupils both.

I managed to secure relief for my little daughter at that time by obtaining permission for her to study in school. My boy, being of a less excitable temperament, was not suffering as much damage, but a few months later I took them both out, for various reasons, and renewed the home school, where I expect to keep them for some years.

These scenes that I have transcribed are most simple in construction—puerile they would be accounted in a literary sense, but as faithful recitals of actualities, which testify to certain conditions existent in our public schools today, they are of grave importance. Look about you; your own eyes will substantiate the truth of my words. Hardly any one who has children is without one or more evidences of the results of this overcrowding system, and the overloaded arms of many young folk in the higher grades, as they return from school, is an additional proof of what I have asserted.

I asked a high school miss of my acquaintance, whom I met one afternoon, what she was supposed to do with that pile of books she was carrying.

"Learn them, every one, before tomorrow morning," she replied with a laugh—she was not of the kind that takes life seriously.

"You know very well you can't do that," I said.

"I know that I can slip out of them then," she responded, with another laugh.

And so she passed on, to study her lesson in superficiality and evasion. Again I look back to my own school days in the city which was my home. I have a picture before me now of one of my classmates—a bright girl, the daughter of an army officer—as she sat crying in a vexed, despondent way, because she realized that she could not, by any possibility, learn all the lessons assigned her. It often seemed to me personally, as if each teacher gave what would comfortably fill the time between the close of school one day, and its opening the next, without the slightest thought of what any other teacher might be giving. This method, when adopted by some half dozen teachers, naturally resulted in a volume of work which we could hardly have crammed into our poor little brains had we charged them to the very muzzle.

It is the work we don't do that kills; we all know that, and the school work I could not master broke me down, and came near crippling me for life.

The system is all false—all miserably wrong. We know what it is for a student to cram for examination; a brain temporarily stretched, as it were, only to spring back again with an impaired quality. What is learned

for the occasion does well if it lasts the occasion out; it is not expected to last longer. It is so with cramming for recitation. No fine intellectual results can be obtained by this method; these require the careful, thoughtful conning of a few—a very few lessons, and morally I am convinced that the results of this work for the hour are disastrous.

Overwork is not confined to the children, teachers also suffer from it. Compelled oftentimes, by their tasks, to remain after school hours, carrying home a load of various kinds, that must be lifted before the next day, they too often return to school listless and weary—in no condition to impart knowledge, much less to inspire their pupils with lofty ideals.

As a consequence of the much to do and little to gain (for the pay is small) we frequently have to fill our lists with the names of women who possess no taste or qualification for the grandest position outside of parenthood. I have known many teachers and admired most of them, but for all this I could not help seeing that a large number were out of place.

“You can’t imagine how I long for Friday, and how I dread Monday,” said one to me, a while ago.

I felt sorry for her, poor girl, but I felt still more sorry for her pupils. The difference between what their school work was with her, and what it might have been with one gifted for the work, is too great for us to grasp easily.

Personally I regarded her with greater wonder and admiration than I would have regarded a teacher who loved her work; for the stern performance of distasteful duties, week after week, and month after month, im-



plies moral strength of no common order. Unhappily, however, her pupils received but little benefit from this, but, on the contrary, suffered from the lack of other qualities in this misfit case. But even an enthusiastic teacher finds his spirit taxed, and often spent, by this severe regime. The number of exercises (needless exercises it seems to me) and examination papers to be taken home, not only preclude any idea of rest by change and amusement, but too often prevent the study and reading necessary for advancement in his art. These manifold exercises are injurious to both teacher and pupil—ruining as they do the handwriting of the latter.

In school continual unrest is the law. Only lately a friend, speaking of her children, said:

“I really don’t know what to do with them, but I must make some change next year; they have no chance to study in school—teacher rattles on all day—and no time for play out of school.”

Now when the teacher is compelled to “rattle on all day,” a grievous wrong is done her, and the children as well. If we do not wish to become a nation of rattle-brains, we must put a stop to this rattling on continually in school. A necessary element of a good education is quietude—opportunity for study, opportunity for thought, and instruction in studying and in thinking. No intellectual brawn and muscle, capable of standing the test of time, can be formed in the midst of noise and commotion. Nor is this condition favorable to the cultivation of the best type of manners. As a nation we lack poise, and what wonder? The peculiarity of our climate, the conditions of our business life,

and still more the training we receive as children, all tend in the direction of nervous excitement.

The superficial result of this—quickness, animation of feature and intellect, is temporarily fascinating, but alas for the stuff that endures unto the end. Now I am not advocating such solidity of education as shall disbar all that lighter literature, intercourse and experience which tends to lend a sparkle to manner and conversation. Such a course would be unfortunate, since it would produce men and women so heavy and clumsy in the movements of every day life, that one who had the misfortune to attempt to manipulate them, socially or otherwise, would, as she trundled them about from place to place, feel as if she had a number of pieces of ponderous furniture on her hands of a sweeping day. In this matter of training, as in almost all else, the golden mean is the true path, and the wisdom to discover it, and the strength to keep the feet therein, should be our goal.

I shall have more to say on this subject of unrest later on; and, if I am not much mistaken, we have more suffering of various kinds to undergo because of it later on.

We are in continual need of being reminded that it is not what we eat that makes us strong, but what we digest and assimilate—not what we read or study that makes us intellectual, but what we remember and appropriate, and that it is folly to attempt to devour books by the wholesale.

Here, in America, "Too much! too much!" is a common cry. We overeat, overwork and overstudy. As a nation we are intemperate, and knowing this, we nevertheless go on deliberately, it would seem, fostering in

our children those unfortunate tendencies which are their inheritance as Americans. Not only are our public schools attempting to teach too much, from year to year, but in the opinion of some of our thoughtful men and women, they are carrying the course too far.

It has, for some time, been a grave question with many whether the state was doing its citizens a kindness in giving them such an education free. We all have noted a growing dissatisfaction with labor; an impatience with its necessarily hard conditions and modest returns; a restlessness in the lower ranks of society; a growing determination to step out of the working classes and to forsake the trades, for the situations.

Near me, in a little village in which I lived for a time, was a sweet, gentle Swedish woman, of the class which make up the peasantry in her own country. She was working herself into an early grave in order to give her daughters time for an education. She was but one of a horde of mothers who want their daughters to become teachers, when there are already more teachers from out that class than there is any legitimate place for, while all over our land, burdened wives and mothers are longing to give comfortable homes and modest wages for just such service, as these girls could render, and no doubt would render, were they not spoiled by our public school system.

I am very well aware that such a paragraph as the foregoing is enough to cost a politician his head, but that fact does not impair its truth. If we could for a moment get outside of our vaunted freedom and equal opportunity for all, we might look at this subject dispassionately and see that a contented peasantry, where thrift, integrity, domestic virtues and modest wants were



leading characteristics, adds strength to a nation, while on the other hand a seething, discontented class, scornful of manual labor, in haste to be rich, fiercely determined to be thought "as good as any body else," is a menace to national safety. If our public school system tends to diminish the first named class, and to swell the numbers of the second, we shall ultimately see our error, and wish we had seen it earlier in the day.

When we come to consider the matter, the various branches in the higher walks of professional and business life play but a small part in ministering to our necessities, in comparison with the trades and so-called menial occupations. For this reason the State, representing as it does the people at large, would be worse than foolish to burden itself with taxation in order to carry on a system of education calculated to unfit its children to serve the people. I am not asserting that our present system does this, but I am earnestly advocating that we look into the matter.

We are ready enough to see that a great increase of self-respect and ambition sometimes results from a constant repetition, in the ear of our American youth, of such remarks as "You may be President some day," or "There's always room on the top;" but we seldom pause to see that these statements, true enough in themselves, and true enough in connection with some few individuals, nevertheless work serious injury to great numbers of people. If we will but step out of the glare and bustle of every day life into some quiet nook, as it were, where we shall cease to hear the screaming of the American eagle, long enough to realize this, we may be induced to make some important changes in our public school system, and to listen, without passion or scorn, to thoughtful

people who tell us that the rudiments—an ability to read and write; such ciphering as may be necessary in every day life; some knowledge of geography, and manual aptness in some trade, is all the education the State should be called upon to furnish.

I hope that I shall not be understood to assert that whatsoever is more than this Yea and Nay of education, cometh of evil. But I do say that any unprejudiced observer can see for himself that the results of our present system are very unsatisfactory, and in the overturning of affairs which is sure to come, soon or late, our thinkers may decide that anything beyond the elementary branches should be paid for, in money or in labor. There are today schools and colleges where the expenses of tuition and residence are small, and the opportunities for industrious, capable and ambitious boys and girls (the only kind worthy of education) to work their way, are many.

The Lowell School of Practical Design in Boston, whose tuition is free, furnishes in its regulations some hints upon which our public school boards would do well to reflect. At this institute the number of pupils is limited to forty-two, and “only those students can be retained who, after a fair and patient trial, are found to have some aptitude for the work.” At the close of each half year all those found to be gravely deficient are notified and a quiet—seemingly voluntary—withdrawal is the result.

Such institutions would increase in number and efficiency, were the demand for them to increase, so the abolition of advanced education, given freely and indiscriminately, need not doom our clever, energetic youth to ignorance.

The self-made man is already an American divinity, and although we have pushed him rather too far up in the air and he is, as some one remarked, tremendously fond of trying himself on in public, he makes, on the whole, a much more substantial and useful citizen than some of the nerve-spent, brain-spent, enervated products of our free education, and we need not hesitate to multiply his species by a change in our methods.

But whatever our educators may decide upon this point in the future, one thing is certain in the present: our curriculum today is too ponderous, and our students too hard pressed.

Scientists have learned that slow growth is a law of superiority in the animal world; according as the infancy, or period of development, is long or short, the maturity is superior or inferior. The jungle fowl—low in the scale of intelligence—is a notable instance of precocity, since it is equipped for life so early that upon breaking its shell it immediately flies away, whereas, on the other hand, man's formative period extends over a space of more than twenty years, and he does not begin to fly until he reaches the age of fourteen or fifteen!

On every side we see proofs of the disastrous effect of forcing; hot-house plants are notably delicate, and animals whose growth is forced by unnatural conditions are rarely ever sound. The hair may be forced to abnormal length, by certain treatment, but as a hairdresser once told me, Nature always avenges herself for the disturbance of her methods, and premature loss is the result. With these, and many other instances illustrative of the folly of undue pressure in mind, what can we expect when we place that most delicate structure, the human

brain, in a hot-house of learning and subject it to a forcing process?

I am very well aware that today there is much in the life of our nation calculated to shine out in seemingly brilliant proof of the wisdom of our present method. I am thankful that this is the case. Heaven forbid that we should delay to sound the warning until the bomb had actually burst and naught remained of the once fair edifice but an unsightly wreck. Today, on the surface perhaps, all is fair and smooth and we are pluming ourselves, as a nation, on our public school system. Nor is self-praise all we hear; not long ago Lord Rosebury, speaking of the wonderful advance the United States had made within a comparatively short time, in commercial power, found the explanation of this phenomenon in our public school system, fostering, as it does, in the masses, both independence in action and ambition in aim.

This is no doubt true. Why then disturb a method from which we reap such brilliant results? Because, to one who looks beneath the surface, this brilliance is the beauty of the consumptive—the sign and seal of early decay. Now, then, I find myself the target for a storm of invective. I am a traitor to my country, some one cries, prophesying her ruin. Not so; my faith in the sound sense and discretion of our people is great. For the present they are blinded by the glare of prosperity; but once they can be induced to face the actual condition of affairs, they will institute such changes as shall save our youth for future greatness.

America is, as yet, an infant among nations—let us bear that in mind. What are one or two hundred years



as a test of endurance? What are several hundred as a final proof? Why, it is only a few years, comparatively speaking, since Columbus was looking us up with a spy-glass—only a few years since this entire country was a wilderness of solemn forests, lighted by the glare of the war-dance fire; of richly carpeted valleys where the deer were wont to graze; and of towering mountains whose rocky cliffs hurled back the defiance of the war whoop.

Even today, in those grey old worlds across the sea, there are many people who think of us as still clad in a blanket, with—not a harp, but a tomahawk “within our hands.” To be sure this ignorance on their part proves them better fitted for those emblems of national infancy—the blanket and the tomahawk—than we; but it also serves to remind us of our youth as a nation.

“What of that!” you cry. “See what we have accomplished!”

I know; I know; it makes a brave list and I love to run it o’er. It begins away back; we didn’t wait for numbers, but commenced when there were but a handful of us—a little handful that had just scrambled out of the sea and perched on the extreme edge of this continent, of which we knew nothing, beyond the dark forest fringe that hemmed us in—back in 1773, by our being sassy to our elders, and saying we didn’t want their old tea and wouldn’t have it. Our swift next came when, in 1776, we threw off parental authority; then in 1812 we raised our flag on the high seas and proved that every word of the Declaration of 1776 was underlined; in 1846 we took another child into our household and said “hands off” to those from whose bondage she had escaped. In 1865 we settled a family quarrel, and later reconstructed the

disturbed portion of our household, and cemented the two pieces that had been temporarily severed; in 1898 we took our place among the nations of the world, raised the banner of humanity and made even scoffers (who, themselves unworthy, cannot recognize nobility in others) realize that we are a power to be reckoned with in the adjustment of republics, kingdoms, and empires. In 1900 we proved that our shield was, as yet, untarnished, and our flag, like the good knight, "without fear and without reproach." Not only have we proven our collective dignity, but we have won admiration for individual worth. At the court of St. James, as well as at Berlin and other seats of government, we have been so honorably, so ably and so graciously represented that the word American has come to stand for a high type of manhood; while in all the recent diplomatic manipulations entailed by our affairs with Spain and with China, we have had cause for honest pride, since we, as well as others, have realized that no potentate was ever more qualified to uphold the high standard of a christian gentleman—to show forth that commingling of cool sense and tender compassion; of sound morality without priggishness; intellectuality without pedantry; that combination of simplicity and frankness with dignity and reserve, than our beloved President; and I trow not one among all the heads of peoples on the face of the globe today has been more respected and admired, alike by friend and (honest) foe, than he.

When we think on all these things, we wax proud, and then cometh danger. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Supposing we grant that all is well now, what of the future? Ere long we

of the present generation! perfect as we undoubtedly are—will have passed on. Who is to take our place? The youth of today. And how are they being prepared for their coming responsibilities? As the twig is bent, the tree is inclined; and if the twig is bent to breaking, the tree is going to be a crochety, feeble affair. Are our schools of today calculated to turn out men and women strong in brain and strong in principle? I refer to our schools as a whole; but as the mass of our people receive their education in the public schools, I refer especially to them.

I do not expect any one to accept my single testimony in answer to so momentous a question; in matters that concern the people, the people should testify. My voice is but one of a million; you can hear the others if you will but listen. Hardly a day passes but what some important testimony in this case comes to me.

Lately, it was this story: A mother in a large western city found her patience with the public school methods worn threadbare, and took up that which is mightier than the sword, in defense of some of the wrongs from which her family, in common with others, were suffering. In the article which she wrote, she stated that she and her husband hardly knew what it was to have an evening to themselves, for they were obliged to help their children learn the numerous and lengthy lessons which they brought home from school.

"We felt we were paying a school tax for having our children taught, and yet we were obliged to spend the little time we have together at home, in teaching," she said.

Even with that, there was complaint at the school;

although her children were no dullards, yet with all the help they received at home they could not master the work. In the article this mother wrote, she called the attention of the public to the number of children who had broken down during their school days, and asked if such crowding of young brains should be allowed to continue.

The superintendent of schools in this particular city was a man high in Masonic rank, and otherwise influential, and fearing to antagonize him and his faction, one of the papers refused to print the article. Two others had the courage to print it, however, and one called especial attention to it by inclosing it in blue lines and writing an excellent editorial. That it struck a responsive chord was manifest by the signs of gratitude shown its author. Women who were strangers to her—women who themselves feared to speak their minds in public on the subject—drove up to her door and, as it were, whispered their thanks.

Now let us turn from this matter of broken health to some other points. Even if our children were able to stand the mental and nervous strain, there are other objections of the most serious nature to our present school system. Educators are learning, more and more, that the study *about* things is not sufficient; there must be object lessons also; practice as well as theory.

The failure to remember this accounts largely for another failure on the part of the children after they come out of school. Indeed it often seems as if they are by their training actually unqualified for life, instead of being qualified. Could the Solons who compile our elaborate curriculum be prevailed upon not to try and



cover the entire universe of learning—could they be induced to select for the attention of students a few vigorous fundamental branches, reserving the less common and less needful studies for those who wish to follow especial lines, the entire school work might not only be performed during the school hours, but those hours could be shortened, and more time left for the practical work which every parent should teach his child to perform, and more time also for the fostering and strengthening of home ties.

Again and again, in talking over their children with me, parents have complained of some serious defect in the character or in the education as far as it had progressed.

“Can’t you remedy it at home?” I ask, “devise some training toward that especial end?”

The almost invariable answer is:

“Oh no! there’s no chance for that; all their time in school and out is taken up by their studies.”

Is it not amazing that we, a free, intelligent people, will go on paying out money to keep up a system which is peculiarly well adapted to make our children both selfish and unpractical? To keep them oftentimes at studies for which they have no ability, and of which they have no need, while branches for which they have marked taste, and whose study would advance their interests in life, are neglected?

I am very well aware, as I write, of the existence of two classes of parents, both of which would unite in opposing any such salutary step as shortening the school hours; the one consists of foolish people, incapable of discerning what is for the best good of their children,

or perhaps too indolent or unprincipled to be willing to perform their duty toward them—the other, of people so overburdened by the cares of life that they have neither time nor strength to train crude effort, and no money to risk in careless, immature labor. These two classes complain that unless their children are kept at school long hours, and then sent home with work to occupy them, they are running the streets and getting into mischief. The problem of the parent who has no right to children, and of the overworked parent who is oppressed and thwarted by unjust conditions, is not new by any means. Later on in this article I have a suggestion to offer for the care of those children whose parents are thus unable to perform their duty.

This mention of parents brings us to another point in our objection and this is the weakening of family ties. That this most lamentable evil must result directly from our present school system can readily be seen. The long absence from home; the return, laden with work of an engrossing nature, demanding quiet and seclusion, must separate the children, in large measures, from the affairs of home, and this separation must of necessity result in a certain degree of alienation and indifference.

In some of the cities in which I have lived I have found it all but impossible to strike a responsive chord in the teacher's heart when I have pleaded for the preservation of the home hour for games, or reading aloud, or fireside chat; or the afternoon for country excursions, picnics, drives or rides. Even where no open objection has been made to my setting aside the children's studies occasionally for anything of this kind, I have felt the

teacher's unspoken thought, that I was making the *important* give way to the *trivial*. The plea for time for children to perform certain home tasks—to learn sewing, cooking, gardening, or some other practical work, has always met with a more ready response if put in the form of my needing their assistance, although it was not always possible to make room for it. That last, in both instances, has generally devolved upon myself, and when I have done it I have been forced to take my children out of the regular course and make them feel something like aliens in their own classes. Both these points are worthy of the gravest consideration, and indeed are receiving it, in some directions, though the blame is not always laid at the right door.

I was deeply impressed by the following sentence, which I ran across lately in the London Spectator, in an article on the relationship of parent and child: "The complications of advancing civilization do not strengthen the primitive ties; the conditions of life in the present day put a great strain on the parental bond and in many instances, alas, snap it altogether." That being the case, and I hardly think any one who reflects deeply will deny this, and the importance of these ties—their developing, strengthening, and ennobling influence being allowed, to say nothing of God's manifest intention in creating them—is it not madness on our part to foster and uphold a system which tends to hasten the very ruin we so gravely apprehend?

During the recent visit which many places in our country have received from the President there was considerable to set earnest brains a-throbbing. One of the San Francisco dailies struck a fine note, I thought,

in an editorial in which it said that with due consideration for all the apt, able and tactful addresses that Mr. McKinley had made, about the best thing he had done for the youth of our land was to teach them a touching lesson of the strength and beauty of the domestic tie. If I might add something to this, I would say that, to my mind, after due consideration of all the evidences of loyal devotion shown our President, by youth and maturity, along his pathway, the most beautiful tribute to him, and to the good dwelling in their own hearts, was their quick response to him as an individual—to the father who had been bereaved, to the husband whose eyes ever anxiously watched—ever lovingly followed the sweet-faced woman he calls by the sacred name of wife. As long as the hearts of the people throb in response to such appeals, there is hope for the future.

## PART II.

### THE GROWING IMMORALITY OF CHILDREN.

However urgent the foregoing topics may be, their importance dwindles into insignificance when compared with that of which we must speak in this division. The Book, which has long been a beacon-light for the greatest nations on earth, says: "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul." And this solemn question is the one we must now ask.

If our young people could stand the mental strain imposed by their school work; if they were not rendered impractical by their devotion to theory, to the exclusion of practice, and if the strength of their home ties were not impaired by the absorption of time and interest elsewhere, there would still be much to say. In treating the points upon which we have just touched, we have arraigned the school system, holding that it tends directly to work injury in these regards; but in the matter which we are now about to take up, I hardly think we can find the schools responsible. That our educational system can be changed for the better in most respects I am certain; but the particular evil to which I now refer exists in even more virulent form outside than inside the school districts. While not arraigning educators as chiefly responsible, I would nevertheless press this matter upon their attention, and implore their aid in the cure of this moral disease.

Many articles on sociology, especially those dealing directly with reforms, are colored by despondency when speaking of the making over of men and women; but almost all agree in feeling that hope lies with the chil-



dren. It should be so; the cloudiest face, when brooding over the difficulty of weaning the mature sinner from his baseness, should brighten into sunshine at thought of the children. What may we not make of them! Inheritance presses downward with fearful force it is true, but even that load though may be lifted if we use such good levers as prayer, watchfulness and judgment. But if we do not—if through our godlessness, carelessness and folly we allow children to come up at haphazard, how can we look the future in the face? What is to become of our rivers and lakes if our springs are poisoned?

Those who have studied the youth of our land are already cognizant of the fact that a pestilence, more virulent than plague or cholera, has attacked them, I should think it unnecessary to add proof, were it not for the fact that a large number of unmarried or childless people (and unhappily the majority of our educators are in this class) are not aware of the extent to which this evil has gone. Even many parents, heedless or overconfident of their children's virtue, are ignorant of the fact that the plague has broken out in their very midst.

Personally I cannot testify in favor of private schools over and against public schools. In my childhood I was sent to the fashionable seminary of the city in which I lived. Later on, becoming offended with one of my teachers, I withdrew, and, after a period of private instruction, went to the high school, and lastly, for a time, to a university. A number of my classmates at the seminary were exceedingly vulgar girls, and because I disliked their remarks and insinuations, most of which I but faintly comprehended, they dubbed me "The Good." At neither the



high school nor university did I see or hear anything impure.

But, although this was my personal experience, from all I have been able to learn, on every side, I am inclined to think:

First. That the children of families standing high in the social scale are, as a general thing, less given to vulgarity and immorality than such children as make up the majority of the public school classes.

Second. That when the children of educated parents indulge in vulgarity, as a general thing they do so more covertly than common children, thereby rendering it more destructive for themselves, but less contagious.

Third. That vulgarity and immorality are more common in our primary and grammar schools than in our high schools, colleges and universities, owing to the weeding out of the inferior pupils from year to year.

Fourth. That vulgarity and immorality when practiced in the latter schools, are more covert and therefore more destructive to the individual, though the rank and file are less exposed to contagion, by reason of their secretiveness.

My conclusions may be at variance with those of other people better informed upon this subject than myself, but they are drawn from a large number of instances which have come to my knowledge in the various places where I have lived.

Let any one who thinks I am exaggerating this evil withhold his criticism until he has thoroughly investigated the matter in the place in which he lives.

By nature I was unsuspicious, unobserving, and also very ignorant on the vital themes of life. Consequently

much, no doubt, passed me unnoticed. Not until I began sending children to school did I realize that that hideous monster Immorality did not wait for its victims to reach mature years. Almost before my babies were out of my arms I was warned to keep them from certain children near me (one, the little son of an army officer), lest they be taught vulgarity. When I moved to Chicago and took a house in a delightful suburb, I was cautioned to keep my children from a little boy and girl belonging to a family who lived in a handsome place over the way, as these children were already living a hideously corrupt life. It appeared that the mother had been told of it, but she resented the information. She and the father were fashionable people, of gross private life, so the children were to be pitied, and I did pity them; but I told my maids to admit the smallpox any day, rather than admit those children inside my gate. I watched my little ones with lynx eyes, without letting them know it; but my two oldest had started to school, and there they encountered this filthy trouble. Several times on his way home (I always looked for the children at just such a moment) my little son was thrown to the ground and commanded to expose himself. He was released when he resisted, but another child might have yielded. Here, as in many other schools, there were no suitable closet arrangements—the boys going down into a basement where there was a continuous row of seats divided off by *no partitions*. Occasionally a teacher kept watch here, but more frequently the children were left alone, and under such favorable circumstances for the propagation of vice, it flourished horribly.

In other cities, and in somewhat older ranks, even

worse came to my terrified ear. The conversation of some of the young people, overheard by my children, was such as might be expected only in brothels; filthy jokes and conundrums even among young girls were not uncommon. In a few cases the consequences of immorality became so evident that young girls were asked to leave school. One of these eloped and married the boy before the birth of her child.

In the village in which I lived for a time the happenings were more conspicuous than they would have been in a city, and we heard more of them; but I have no idea that it was any worse, morally speaking. I considered the school faculty superior in courtesy and sympathetic understanding of the desires of the parents and needs of the pupils to that of many of the schools with which my children had been connected. But the teachers seemed powerless to stem the tide of immorality which at times threatened us with a filthy deluge; and while many of the pupils were as clean and wholesome young folks as one could wish to see, many others were more or less stained. Outside of school there were several pitiable cases in the village. One, a fatherless child, whose mother going out by the day, left her much to herself; she was expelled from school for immorality, and later on was the victim of a crime involving several elderly men (grandfathers, hitherto considered at least respectable).

Unfortunately, the community's concern to preserve its reputation for godliness seemed greater than its concern for its children; consequently the officials of the place, instead of aiding those of the next village, who came over to inquire about the matter, tried to

hush it up; and some one was even base enough to go bail for the chief offender, a white headed rone, who should have been hung to the nearest tree.

This girl of whom I am speaking—a child barely twelve years of age—and her younger sister were village problems. They were a menace to the community, in as much as they solicited and enticed, and many of the village boys joined them in immorality.

Another instance was that of the children of a mother who, after long continued unfaithfulness, at last went to her partuer in crime. The oldest girl, eleven or twelve years old, had charge of the family. Often she was seen on the streets in the evening and her conduct was the same as that of her companion, the little girl of whom I have just spoken. The pathos of the situation was intensified by the faith of the father, who clung to the hope that God would send his wife home repentant; he was quite ready to forgive her.

“He is not right in his head,” some one said to me; “he was kicked by a horse a while ago.”

“It is a pity,” I answered, “some of the rest of us couldn’t be kicked in the head, if such love and Christian charity would result.”

The disposition and proper care of these miserable little waifs was a problem with some of the tender hearted, conscientious people there. A woman with children could not receive such morally diseased little ones into her family, but oh that some motherly, childless woman might have taken them to her heart and striven, with God’s help, to heal them!

Some of the village lads sixteen and seventeen years of age visited Chinatown for low purposes, bringing



moral and physical contagion back with them; others were seen openly parading the streets with abandoned women from a Spanish-Mexican village near by and from the large city which was not far distant.

At a recent lecture I heard Dr. Jordan of Stanford quoted as saying that a large proportion of our youth were morally ruined before entering university life, and most of us know how it is with many during their university career.

It is not so very long since a secret individual vice threatened the destruction of one of our well-known colleges. A large number of the students became too ill to prosecute their studies properly. As there was no legitimate reason for sickness, a strict investigation followed, and this elicited many confessions, and resulted in such a number of withdrawals that the institution was, for a time, seriously crippled.

I spoke to a friend of mine on this awful subject some months ago, and she seemed a little sceptical. Lately, however, she came to me and said that, while riding in the street car from one village to another, she saw in large, legible characters upon a pretty cottage on the roadside the most depraved words, evidently written by a child. Hamlin Garland, in one of his stories, speaks of obscenity scrawled in the dust of the road by passing children, on their way to school from the different farmhouses.

Several of my acquaintance living near vacant stables have told me of seeing school children enter these places at different times, and of learning, upon investigation, enough to shock and terrify any one to whom purity is sacred.

Not content with the individual sin which eventually engulfs body and soul, and physically inclines toward the insane asylum, some poor wretched children have taken a shorter cut into the hell fires of sensuality, by learning, from whom God alone knows, an unnamable vice, which is said to have come from France. I cannot think of this without a shudder. I have never had it explained to me, and hope I never shall, but I was warned on this account against some children in my neighborhood—poor miserable looking creatures, whose faces told an awful story.

I can go no farther; I am heartsick. The subject leaves me with a bad taste in my mind. I feel as if I had dipped my pen in the sewer. Surely I have brought forward enough proof, but if not, there is alas! an abundance of evidence on every hand.

Now there should be three parts to any dissertation on an evil; First, the proof that it exists; second, the cause for it; third, the remedy. Only the willfully blind can refuse to be convinced of the existence of this immorality among our children; but as to its cause even a wise man may go astray. We can, however, mention certain things which tend in that direction, although they may not be the sole causes of that which we deplore.

Before entering upon this partial list of causes I wish to say that, in treating of the sins of children, I have not mentioned profanity (which I have sometimes heard from girls as well as from boys) because that is more universally recognized as an evil than the others upon which I have dilated, and being a more open, and less delicate transgression it is more easily dealt with. With



regard to all these vices many people are under the impression that their locality is worse than others, and in pursuance of this idea I have known families to move from one place to another solely to put their children in a better environment.

There is no doubt something in this. There must be, for it is noticeable in business relations, as well as in those of children. The state or region that dates its early settlement to any cause likely to bring together people of a loose way of life must wait long before it can enjoy the pure, fresh air of integrity which belongs to those communities who date their beginnings to a more honorable ancestry. Most of those countries and regions that were originally penal settlements, or gold fields, testify today to the truth of this assertion. Climatic conditions are found to have weight also in determining the character of individuals as well as of nations; and, all other things being equal, we may look for the more vigorous type of morality in the more vigorous climate.

Still I am inclined to think that, after having given these broad differences due weight, we gain but little in this respect by a change of abode. I have never lived in New England, and I still hope that in that land of original sterling worth we may find more backbone in the matter of principle today than in some other places I have known, but as far as my experience in the matter of residence does go, there is not very much choice when considering the subject of immorality among children, and this fact leads me to conclude that it is widely spread.

Such being the case let us consider the cause—for

cause there must be. To begin with the lesser, our schools, in this regard as in others, are in great need of change. For one thing there are, I think, too few teachers—for sympathy in teaching and for proper supervision. As a matter of course there is such a thing as a surveillance that provokes evil, and in this, as in all else, good intent must walk hand in hand with wisdom.

Another cause, perhaps, from which we suffer, is too limited playgrounds. In a school which my children attended in a large city on the Pacific Coast, the pupils were packed like sardines in the yard at recess. For fear of accident the most vigorous rules were made, prohibiting all sports of an athletic nature; for a boy even to chase another about the yard was a misdemeanor. Hence the children, denied a proper outlet for spirits and energy; limited by nature as to proper subjects for conversation, and closely associated with those who continually see and hear the worst at home, sank into immorality; obscenity became rife among them.

Here is something else of which I learned—something that cannot fail to work evil: In a school some twenty miles from my present home, a secret society is in force among the children. By its laws no member is allowed to reveal any of the happenings in and about the school, on penalty of certain punishments, more or less severe. Furthermore, pressure of a kind felt by children, is brought to bear upon them on entering the school, to join this society, and very few dare brave the odium of refusal. Protected by the false idea of brotherhood and honor inculcated by such an organization, it is almost impossible for a teacher to

search out evildoers, and yet, strange to say, up to the last accounts that reached me—a few months ago—no vigorous measures had been adopted by the teachers for the breaking of this corrupting bond.

Both overlaxness and overrigidity, in the government of the young, are often causes of failure. When one comes to a study of this subject, the blindness of those who should be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves is amazing. I am thinking now of two villages with which I became familiar a while ago; the one is characterized by the Mexican-Indian (with perhaps a slight strain of Spanish thrown in) and, as far as moral tone is concerned, is a most degraded place; the other, an American village, was originally a Methodist settlement; it is, in the main, a kindly, moral place, though sadly lacking in breadth and christian charity. At first its rules were so rigid and its surveillance of private life so impertinent that no one of proper spirit could endure a residence there, and even now that the rigor is relaxed as far as aggressive superintendence is concerned, there is, it seems to me, an almost utter lack of sympathy with the desire and need for amusement among the half-grown lads and lasses, and so it comes to pass that, lacking suitable diversion, many of them pass all bounds, and in improper places and improper ways satisfy their inclinations. The two places stand, to my mind, for ill-mated parents, between whose overlaxity on the one side, and overseverity on the other, the children are ruined.

But although we may place some of this awful trouble upon schools and communities, the main responsibility no doubt lies nearer home. Parents are criminally



careless oftentimes, in the very beginning, giving their children over to the care of unprincipled nurses. A physician once told me that many children were ruined by servants, careless parents, of a coarse grain of mind, sometimes letting quite sizeable boys sleep with them, when the limitations of house-room seemed to demand crowding. In addition to this there is, in families of the lower class, a certain jesting about one another that is calculated to inculcate a most unfavorable precocity in boys and girls and to diminish that sense of delicacy, which should be most carefully preserved in them. Such parents seem unable to comprehend the beauty of an opposite course—that of prolonging to its utmost extent the period when children give no thought to sex; nor do they realize that later on when, at the age of puberty, this idea begins to dawn, they should turn it, by the tenderest care, tact and ceaseless watchfulness, into channels which tend in the direction of developing a noble manhood in their boys, and a noble womanhood in their girls. The ~~May, 1891~~, Atlantic contains a most beautiful article on this subject. Every parent and teacher should read it.

There is no doubt that the sins of the parents are visited on the offspring. Can the pure grow from the impure? Occasionally, just as in nature, we sometimes see sweet, white flowers rise from out the mire, but methinks these exceptions are so rare that they but serve to prove the rule, and a large number of children are tainted ere ever they come into the world. As far as I know, man is, in some respects, one of the lower animals; the beasts of the field set him a commendable example by respecting maternity. Man's

conscience has for too long a period been soothed to sleep by the doctrine that the physical cannot be brought under absolute control. In place of this, he should be taught that enforced maternity never has been productive of purity in the offspring, and never will be; that self-indulgence begets self-indulgence, and that the physical can and should be the servant of the spiritual. Let those whose conscience is "not dead, but sleeping," rouse to this truth, and consider the responsibility they assume when they refuse to recognize it in the married life.

Among the lower classes where the hard necessities of home-making under the limitations of space exist—where families are too closely huddled together, and a consequent carelessness is engendered—I have been told that children see and hear far too much, and some of the most sacred relations of life become to them mere objects of curiosity and imitation. I had my attention called to this danger of the tenement and of tiny houses one day when I was speaking of a certain little child to an acquaintance. "She knows too much," said the woman. "She knows more than you or I. There's nothing in connection with the coming of life that could be told her."

It seemed as if the child's very aspect changed as I listened to these words; her pretty baby contour (she was but four years old) shrank, and in place of the little innocent I had fancied her, I saw before me a weird object—nor child nor woman, nor old nor young, only something uncanny, uncleanly. By nature I love the little ones, and long to take them to my heart; a few years ago, before I heard or knew anything of this, I

could hardly pass one in the street without stopping for word or caress. Now my heart aches as I look at them—poor babies! to have sold their birthright of innocence and beauty for—oh for what!

Perhaps I exaggerate the number who are polluted as I describe. God grant I do! In the first shock of such a revelation as this of immorality among children (and it came to me only a few years ago) one can hardly see clearly enough to count accurately. Grief and horror are always pessimistic, and even a buoyant nature has to struggle against this tendency, in contemplating an evil of such magnitude as this. But in my most depressed moments, when it has seemed to me as if almost all our sweet lambs had gone astray and so few were still worthy to be carried in the dear Lord's arms, I have found comfort in the story of Elijah. I can today, I think, enter with swift sympathy into his heavy heart, when he withdrew from the world and sat one side, abandoned for the time to leaden despondency.

He had tried to stem the tide; had sounded his warning; had rushed hither and thither over the field of the battle of Life trying to instill fainting and traitorous soldiers with loyalty to the great Captain and His cause; had stood in front of the deserting hosts and tried to arrest their flight; but they had turned upon him; they would have slain him had he not escaped. Then, weary and hurt in body, and still more weary and hurt in soul, he crept off into the wilderness like a wounded deer, and there gazed with mental vision upon the ruin and desolation of all he loved best, and the victory of all that was infamous. What wonder that he cried to God that all had gone; only he, sitting solitary and alone,



broken in spirit, crushed in heart, was left to serve his Maker. And then came the answer, calm, serene—a sweet, clear, steadfast note—"Yet I have left seven thousand in Israel; all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal."

And so I take heart once more. God has not let Satan have all our children. There is a large remnant left; a remnant of babies as sweet, as pure as the angels; of little ones in whose large, wondering eyes we catch a glimpse of the "land of the leal;" whose baby voices lure us to a better life, and the hold of whose precious, tender little hands is the strongest on earth. God grant that we may so learn to deal with our children—to train and guide and protect them, that this large remnant may wax greater with each succeeding year, until it shall embrace not only all of babyland, but all of childhood and youth as well. When that day comes we shall indeed be a nation among the peoples of the world—a nation of brave men, and women beautiful in the loftiest sense of the word.

And what is the road to this end? First of all, to ask ourselves this question again and again. We forget to do this when we arrange our stupid curriculum—when we govern our schools in a haphazard, careless fashion. The question brings us up with a sharp jerk. For what *are* we training? To cram certain mathematical problems, certain facts in geography into young brains as a charge is crammed down the mouth of a cannon? or are the mathematics, the geography, and so on, but incidental—a means to an end, and that end the development of the child's intelligence; the opening of his eyes to the beauty and usefulness possible in life; his

relationship to life, and obligation to his Creator? Is his training designed merely to teach him certain facts, or is it intended for the developing of his moral acuteness; his strength of self-control, and for the fostering of the idea of duty and beauty, in even the smallest concerns of life?

Is education a mere acquiring of something for the individual, or is it an enlargening of the mental scope and moral vision—a strengthening of ties, first of all to God, then to the family, and then to that combination of families which we term our country, and even more broadly to the large human family—that brotherhood of man, which comprehends all countries? You may say that most of this is the work of the Church. So it is, more distinctly, and by more direct methods; but I insist that unless the recognizable trend of the school is in this direction, it would better close its doors. Some one said to me the other day that the opportunities of our forefathers for character building were better than ours, and I am not sure but what he was right; for when a boy was sent to an old dame school he was taught to fear God and the multiplication table. Now I was taught to fear the multiplication table, but had I depended upon the school for any prompting toward religion, I might today be an infidel.

In a recent sermon in San Francisco Dr. H. S. Min-turn (moderator of the late General Assembly) spoke warmly as to this matter of religion in the public schools. He approached the subject with an apology, and a protest against being considered disloyal. We are terribly afraid of even the suspicion of speaking against this system. It has been our vaunt and boast

for so long that we hardly dare look at it with candid eyes, and certainly dare not prick it—this blister of national conceit—for fear of the enraged blow which sudden pain might cause our patient to inflict upon us. But unless we do nerve ourselves to examine into the matter honestly, intelligently, and prayerfully, our so-called national strength is in a fair way to become our national weakness.

Here is Dr. Minturn's warning: "God forbid that I should say an ill word against our public school system, the safeguard of our nation, but is the educational machinery subsidiary to the only worthy end of fashioning character? Have we, so morbidly afraid of uniting Church and State, gone so far as to disunite God from the State? This is a most serious question. The fate of our sons and daughters is involved and the kingdom of God in our country is involved. It is not an organized skepticism that threatens, but a God-forgotten secularism."

The editorial, in which this notable paragraph is quoted, went on to speak, in a well written article, of the difficulty attendant upon the bringing of religion into the schools—returning practically to the old theocratic government when Church and State were united, and Church was supreme. I am reminded here of a statement I read the other day to the effect that there were two classes of people: the one class busies itself with the most elaborate and logical setting forth of the reasons why a certain thing cannot be done, while the other class gets right up and does it, without waiting to explain. In this matter I belong to the latter class, for I should certainly put the Bible back into the schools without loss of time.

In an article on Social Progress, by Prof. Ely, which I read in this year's May Cosmopolitan, he quotes President Eliot as saying: "No educational system can be successfully carried on without education in morals, and no education in morals is possible without a religious life." Again he quotes these words from General Brinkerhoff, who has given a lifetime to the work of prison reform: "I want to put it on record with all the emphasis I can command that if we are to make any large progress in the reformation of prisoners, or in the prevention of crime, or in the betterment of mankind, we must utilize more fully than we have heretofore the religious element which is inherent in the universal heart of man."

These are noteworthy paragraphs from noteworthy sources, and it seems to me they are mighty testimony in favor of re-introducing religion into our schools.

In our stupid blundering we have too often confounded religion with the Church; and the Church has ceased to stand for the pure, Christian association our Saviour founded—the association whose members Paul rebuked so earnestly for calling themselves by the name of some human leader. Against sectarianism we should bar our public school gates even as Stephen Girard barred the gates of his college. Sectarianism may be well enough in its place for some people, though I have no use for it. In itself it is harmless, but when it is confounded with religion, then it works injury. We are hedged about with man-made creeds; and the attention of great bodies of ministers is too often given to trying and condemning some fellow minister, for not believing in the damnation of unbaptized infants, or some similar



stuff and nonsense. But albeit we may be somewhat confused by such evidence on the part of those who should be our spiritual guides, that they are unbaptized in Christian grace and charity, and in far greater need of damnation than the poor little babies, yet we are not left in the dark as to the definition of religion, pure and undefiled.

The Book of Books tells us what it is in language so simple and clear that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein: "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." On top of this comes the direction: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

The failure to teach this sublime doctrine in our homes and in our schools is the main reason for the horrible degeneracy of our youth. The Bible in the public schools! Aye, the Book that many of the world's greatest thinkers, after the most elaborate researches into the literature of the ages, have decided contains the only perfect code of morals ever known! That is the Book we want in all our training schools for the young; and whoever objects to this is a traitor to his country's deepest need, I care not by what name he may call himself—philosopher, politician or statesman.

There are many who ascribe the loss of the Bible in our public schools to the Romanists. It is said that after working for years they at last prevailed on our politicians to consent to this ruin. How subtle the



argument before which those who should have stood their ground, yielded. The public schools supported by taxation, so the tempter said, must not teach what the people oppose; the United States having been founded in the name of freedom, in order to give different creeds and beliefs equal rights, must not compel all to support one sect.

What of that? Was not the United States from the first avowedly a Protestant country? Is she not so today among the nations of the earth? Why then in the training of her youth should she be more hampered by this protest of her Romanist citizens against the reading of the Bible than she would be by the protest of her Mormon citizens against the pure doctrines of Christ, which are opposed to polygamy? If it is true that the Romanists object to the soul-inspiring teachings we have quoted above, they are as clearly the enemies of their country's good as the Mormons, and should be given no more heed in the direction of our schools than the latter.

Perhaps they will deny that they do object to such unsectarian teachings as I have advocated. They may deny that it is due to their influence that the Bible was excluded from our public schools. It is a historical fact that they *have* wrought this evil in our land, and thereby have done us a greater injury than they did the Netherlands at the time when Philip II was lighting that unhappy land, from one end to the other, with the bodies of Christian martyrs—for when the Bible went out of our public schools morality went also.

The day cries for reform. Let it not be tardy in com-

ing, lest it come too late. Of old the monster that devoured children was the very embodiment of iniquity and all things horrible. He is no less today. We have seen him in our midst, have actually witnessed the destruction of the children, witnessed the despair of parents as their little ones were lost before their very eyes. What are we to do? In the name of all we hold most dear, fight him to the very death, with the only weapon that will neither break nor bend in the contest—the sword of the spirit.

## PART III.

### SUGGESTIONS AS TO REMEDIES.

Without pretending to propose remedies for all the errors and evils I have noted in the foregoing pages, particularly for those which belong more especially to the realm of pedagogy, I may perhaps offer some suggestions which will be not without value. To take up the points in somewhat the same order in which they have been mentioned, our crowded curriculum first claims attention. Let us bear in mind, in whatever is said, that school boards are not deliberately antagonistic to the needs of the people. Their undeniable failure to adapt their methods to those needs, and to conserve the highest interest of the vast army of children for whom they operate, is generally the result of ignorance rather than of carelessness, and, as a matter of course, is never the result of intention. Unhappily politics, in its baneful workings, has not spared our educational system; the presence of many incompetent members of the school boards, and also of many incompetent superintendents and teachers is due to this fact, and I would urge upon the American public for our children's good, the separation of politics and the public schools. Let these two be divorced, and let us see to it, if necessary, that each weds again in another direction, that there may be no danger of reunion.

Many of the members of our present school boards are so densely stupid that they call to mind Sydney Smith's famous suggestion that the city fathers should

put their heads together, when he was told that the streets needed paving. We want people fitted for their work—women as well as men—on our school boards; not excitable, hysterical women, of the type who regard opposition as personal insult, but intellectual, womanly, self-controlled women; intelligent, thoughtful mothers—women whose swift intuitions are supplemented by careful study of their children's needs—such women as can be found by the hundreds in woman's clubs. Were some such put on every school board, I think we should rapidly come to a better state of affairs.

Another plan that might aid in relieving our congested curriculum is borrowed from academies and colleges—that of elective courses. Why could not these be introduced into our public schools—courses largely determined by the teachers, after some study of the pupil, and each course eligible to graduation honors? Something of this sort is in vogue in our high schools, but much more might be done in that direction.

As for practical life-training work, the home is, after all, the best place for that, if the parent is in position and has the character to attend to it; but if not, then the school should take it in hand, keeping such pupils as are not excused at the parent's request for this work at home, an extra session, and giving them instruction at school. Where I am now living, there are several excellent teachers in the school my children attend, through whose influence practical features of great utility have been introduced. One of these instructs a Sloyd class; another has instituted a school garden, each of whose well-kept beds attest, by their tempting



vegetables, to the pride that the pupil who has it in charge feels in its proper cultivation. Other schools that I have known have introduced a sewing class, and a cooking class—the latter including instruction in some chemistry and in domestic economy. All these branches of learning are of value to every one, and especially so to a child of the people, and while adding greatly to the efficiency of the school work, they add as greatly to its interest with all the pupils whom I have known.

A sympathetic co-operation of school boards, superintendents, teachers and parents would go far toward elucidating many of the problems that confront us now, and the Mothers' meetings held in some of our school-houses are steps in this good direction, especially as they enhance the importance of the parents in the eyes of the children, and connect them directly with the school work.

But whatever else we do, we must get rid of our poor teachers, either by inspiring them with lofty ideals of their work, and thereby making good teachers out of them, or if that is not possible, by lifting them right out of the school, and helping them to find the particular niche for which they were formed and fashioned. One of our crying needs today is for more and better paid teachers—teachers gifted for the work, rather than gifted for patient endurance in the way of earning a livelihood. It will be said that the state cannot afford any increase of her school expenses; in some localities, as we know, she has failed to raise the small wage set apart for the teachers of today, but I would God might give power to my pen—I would I might cry in the ear of every state in our beloved land, that the most expen-



sive thing we can do is to bring up children which we must, later on, feed to the awful maw of the penitentiary, the insane asylum and the imbecile institute. Some may object, just here, to my lack of moderation. Garrison once said that he would not trouble himself to be moderate when dealing with slavery; neither will I trouble myself to be moderate when dealing with the immorality of children. The subject does not admit of moderation.

We already have many ideal teachers who are accepting small pay and doing great work, and we recognize them wherever they are found. Not long ago I was invited to attend a mothers' meeting in a large city school; the faculty were strangers to me and most of them seemed ordinary enough, but there was one woman who stood out from among the rest like a single shining star in a cloudy firmament. She had not spoken a dozen words before I recognized in her that wonderful intuition and sympathy which meant genius for her work. If we had more like her, the entire tone of our school system would be elevated. As matters are now, with so many mediocre teachers, there is much blundering in the training of our children. Take the subject of patriotism; to most of our youth that word stands for war. And what wonder? about the only lessons they receive come on Memorial Day, over the graves of men who died in battle, or on the Fourth of July, when the orator of the occasion proclaims the Revolutionary feats of our forefathers. Boys especially are captivated with this teaching, and patriotism to their minds is a very easy thing; for the average boy would rather enter a fight than keep out of

it; he has plenty of courage to accept a challenge though he may be destitute of the finer courage necessary to decline it. Too rarely do the guardians of our youth teach the deeper lessons of patriotism, and these are what we chiefly need; for war is but an occasional necessity; the notes of trumpet calling to battle are heard less and less often, and we are confidently looking for that day, in the near future, when they shall die away to be sounded nevermore. What then? Why, then abideth the lessons of peace, and these we should be teaching.

Lately a man, speaking to me of his love for his wife, said he would die for her. I repeated this, thinking to give her pleasure. She was silent a moment, and then said sadly, "It is so much easier to die for one than it is to live for one." Now that I have learned that he is selfishly thoughtless of her comfort; that he has that nasty, cowardly kind of temper that is irritable under trifles, that snaps and snarls continually, I understand what she meant.

We should, I think, teach our children that loyalty to one's country is very much the same as loyalty to one's family and home. Even so small a thing as the scattering of papers and picnic debris over our pleasure grounds is unpatriotic, since it is opposed to the good citizenship which takes a pride in its civic home.

Theft, and all other forms of dishonor—everything that serves to drag the family name down into the dust—is disloyalty to one's kindred, so everything that tends to sully the character, and make the name American a reproach, is disloyalty to our country; and just as surely every effort toward a character that will do honor to one's

native land is patriotism of a fine type. We can hire men to die for us, if need be, but we can never hire men to live for us.

This idea of citizenship may be introduced into school life with marked good effect, both temporary and permanent. In the school described in "Arthur Bonicastle" there is a notable instance of this. The boys there were taught that it is just as dishonorable to protect a school criminal as it is to protect a state criminal; that every offense against the honor and well being of the institution is also an offense against every individual in it, and so far from its being mean to bring the culprit to justice, it is mean to shield him; that a dishonest, lying or impure boy or girl is an offense against each member of the school, and also each member of the community to which he or she belongs, and should be so regarded and dealt with.

Another point, and one on which society is slowly awakening, is that there is but one standard of purity, and by this both boys and men must be measured as well as girls and women. In pursuance of this idea guardians of children in the home and at school must be just as careful of the boys as of the girls.

And just here another point arises—a point often debated, often combated—namely the State Kindergarten. For my part I am not only strongly in favor of this, but I would even go a step farther and establish in connection with every public school a public Creche. By means of these three institutions—Creche, Kindergarten and School, the State would be able to train the child from its very infancy until it was ready to step out into the world and become a wage earner.

Expensive? Ay, but far less so than letting these little ones run the streets and alleys until they have, at the age of three or four, learned more vice than all the schools in Christendom can unlearn. Of course no mother worthy of the name would, unless hard social conditions compelled her to be absent from home, give her sacred charges into the hands of the State; but we must always bear in mind that there is a vast army of children whose parents will not or can not care for them; and in this fertile soil, by the help of God and his minister—the inspired teacher, the State can, if she but will, do some sowing that shall later on result in a harvest of noble citizenship. Read Kate Douglas Wiggin's "Patsy," and see what can be done in the Kindergarten, even with a street life back of it. How much more we could accomplish if we took the baby out of unmotherly arms.

I have spoken of our need of teachers; we need something else even more. Would that I might insert an advertisement in every paper, large and small, all over the world. I would put it in the most prominent place, in the largest type, and in the most attractive form: "Wanted—Fathers and Mothers, Christian parents, gifted for their work, which is the loftiest God has ever intrusted to human being; voluntary parents, loving and wanting children, regarding parenthood as supreme, passion as incidental; believing that in the matter of parenthood the propagation of the species is not the main thing; that unless the species be good its propagation is a private and public calamity; and that intelligent parent-hood implies a looking to and provision of the most favorable conditions for the entrance of an im-



mortal soul upon this great stage—the world. And so we sound the call again: Wanted—Fathers who will set a worthy example to their sons; mothers who will regard their children as did Cornelia of old; mothers who will hold their children ready for the time when He cometh, to make up His jewels.

It is this time of His coming which we must bear in mind, for with this swept one side, Life loses all color and meaning. Remember the pagan worship of Greece, and her consequent enervation and ruin; the pagan worship of Rome, and her consequent licentiousness—her “Decline and Fall”—and let us realize that just as surely as we attempt to carry on a scheme of morals that is not founded on the “Good Book,” another Gibbon will arise to write the “Decline and Fall of the United States,” for we have been told, on the highest authority, that there is “none other name under heaven whereby we may be saved, but the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When our eyes are opened, and we go to the right source for help and guidance, we need not despair of the children. Remember our Saviour one day said, “Of such is the kingdom of Heaven;” and another time he “took a little child and set him in the midst of them”—I seem to see that little one, loving, trustful, pure in heart, making efforts, in his baby way, to do as he was told; slipping his little hand into his father’s so confidently, so unquestioningly; ready to walk whither the father led. What wonder Christ bade them “become like unto one of these.” It is a beautiful picture; a beautiful object lesson; it shows us what children should be—what children will be, if we bring them up in God’s way.



So it keeps coming out to the same thing—it is the Gospel first, second and last—not just for Sunday, but for every day of the week; not for church alone, but for home and school as well. I know of no other purification for our defiled springs.

Some nineteen years ago, Professor Koch of Berlin discovered that consumption was caused by a bacillus and that it was contagious. Since that time many and elaborate have been the researches, among physicians all over the world, for some specific to combat this germ. The utmost learning has been brought into requisition, and experiments without number have been performed in laboratories and hospitals. And now, after years spent in that labor, physicians are beginning to use Nature's remedies (which some of us have been using all our lives) and are performing wonders in curing consumptives. Sanatoria are now established in some parts of the world, whose open spaces have no window-glass, and close to these the patient sleeps, well bundled up, with the snow drifting over him perhaps—just plenty of clean, fresh air, by night and by day, and plenty of cold water for bathing.

So may it be with us; after all the elaborate researches of philosopher and sociologist for some specific to combat our disease; after all the stiff-necked assertions of mankind that he can cure himself by effort of will; after experiments on the part of France, Germany, England, the United States and other countries, in checking immorality, God grant we may come, ere it be too late, to His simple remedies—the pure air of the Mount of Olives, and the revivifying Water of Life.

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